

HumeLink Snowy Valley Community Consultative Group: 5th Meeting 5 July 2022

Time	5 - 8pm
Date	05/07/2022
Attendees	<p>Chair: Brendan Blakeley Secretariat: Ella Burgess Transgrid CCG members: Tim Edwards, Naomi Rowe Transgrid speakers: Daniel Burn, Carl Charlier Transgrid project member attendees: Gordon Taylor, Nathan Rhodes, Tammy Sinclair Guest speakers: Brendan Nelson, Independent Peer Review, MacroPlan Community members: Sarah Roche, Rebecca Tobin, Lee Kingma, Julia Ham, Hansie Armour, Pippa Quilty, Phil Clements, Paul Sturgess Deputy Landowner and Community Advocate (Observer): Barbara El Gamal Observers: Several local land holders attended as observers.</p>
Apologies	Ian Robson, Jessica Pearce, Jonathon Tuckerfield, Matthew Sutter, Luke Penrith, Dean Hawkins, Clr Sue Bolger
Meeting location	Valmar Support Services
Meeting materials	Presentation
Purpose of meeting	Meeting 5

Item	Discussion Summary	To note
Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The meeting commenced at 5:05pm. - The Chair welcomed all and gave an Acknowledgement to Country. - The Chair asked each community CCG member, the Transgrid team and observers to introduce themselves and their relation to the HumeLink project. - The new Transgrid team members in attendance included: - <i>Gordon Taylor, Executive General Manager, Major Projects</i> - <i>Nathan Rhodes, Acting Project Director, HumeLink</i> - Also in attendance was Brendan Nelson from MacroPlan who would be conducting an 	

	independent review of Transgrid's route alignment process.	
Minutes and Matters Arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No comments made on the previous minutes. <p><i>The minutes of the previous meeting have been endorsed by the Chair and posted to the Transgrid website.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matters arising were noted as being discussed in the agenda for the meeting. 	
HumeLink Project Update	<p>Naomi gave an update on the HumeLink project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See slide 6 of the presentation for a project update on HumeLink's milestones. - A Council CCG member asked what happened to the old project team who were in attendance at the last CCG meeting in April. - Gordon responded that as Transgrid has a new CEO, he has been assembling his own team around him. As a result, there has been an internal restructure which has recently been completed. As HumeLink moves into a new phase, new leaders with the appropriate skillsets are required to provide guidance. - A community CCG member asked why Transgrid engaged Brendan from MacroPlan. - Nathan noted that to determine Transgrid had investigated every opportunity, it was necessary to engage an expert to determine if there is still work to be done as there are some very difficult decisions yet to be made. - A community CCG member questioned if the undergrounding study proved to be feasible, would that impact Transgrid's choice of contractor. - Naomi noted that the outcomes on undergrounding study should be determined before contractors are approached. - Due to project delivery timeframes (energisation by 2026), the current preferred route needs to continue to be progressed while Undergrounding is being explored. This does not prejudice the outcomes of the undergrounding study should it be found in whole or part feasible. The findings of the undergrounding study will be fed into the project development process and future project deliverables. - A community CCG member stated that the community has wanted to know about the threat of bushfire with this infrastructure on their land for the last few years. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Naomi noted that there is a workshop scheduled for 27 July 2022. The workshop will involve bringing key people together, including those putting together the bushfire risk chapter in the Environmental Impact Study, the RFS and experts in the Transgrid team to answer questions from the CCG and local landholders. The workshop will also be an opportunity to determine if the workshop can be replicated in other impacted communities. - A community CCG member commented that the media has recently portrayed the lack of knowledge Transgrid has when it comes to fighting fires. - Gordon expressed that he can understand why people would feel that way after seeing the media coverage, however he noted that the statements aired were taken out of context. - Tim noted that it was well understood that the bushfire fact sheets presented at the last CCG were not good enough and that is the reason for hosting this upcoming 27 July workshop. - CCG members noted the critical nature of the bushfire topic. - The Chair noted that when invites go out to the community for the workshop, the community should have the option to pre-submit questions ahead of the bushfire workshop. - This was generally agreed upon, noting that the route refinement is not overlooked. - Naomi noted that it is not lost on her how sensitively this topic needs to be treated. 	
<p>Update on the undergrounding feasibility report</p>	<p>Dan gave an update on the undergrounding feasibility report timeline.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See slide 16 of the presentation for an update on the undergrounding feasibility report timeline. - The Chair noted that Rebecca Tobin was the SVCCG representative on the HumeLink Undergrounding Study Steering Committee. - In mid-June Transgrid received the final Undergrounding Report for HumeLink, by independent consultants GHD and Stantec. The report was published on Transgrid’s website, without endorsement from the HumeLink Steering Committee. - The Steering Committee raised a number of concerns with the report, mainly around costings. GHD have now provided new figures 	<p>-</p>

which the Steering Committee are still questioning.

- The Steering Committee met with GHD this week to review the HVDC cable installation component of the cost assessment in The HumeLink Project - Underground report. All parties agreed that additional cost analysis was required, and an independent expert review is underway.
- The Steering Committee will meet regularly over the coming weeks and continues to work towards finalising the report.
- A community CCG member on the Steering Committee complimented the outstanding work Les Brand from Amplitude had done to ensure the community members on the Steering Committee were not overlooked.

Dan provided an overview of the next steps for the undergrounding feasibility report.

See slide 9 of the presentation for an overview of next steps.

- Dan noted that agreement with between the Steering Committee and GHD about next steps is necessary.

Les Brand, technical advisor to the Steering Committee from Amplitude dialled in to share his reflections.

- Les confirmed that the Steering Committee's major concern with GHD's Undergrounding Report was around cost, however quite a number of other comments were made that must be addressed by GHD/Stantec/Transgrid. The ultimate goal is that the undergrounding options are reflected accurately so a fair comparison can be made between undergrounding and overhead.
- Les noted he was happy with the technical side of the work, it's the pricing that needs considerable focus.
- Les noted he has worked with the person appointed to independently assess the costings quoted in GHD's undergrounding report, particularly around long-distance cables which is where he feels the report has gone off track.
- Gordon noted that a lot of conversation has occurred around cost, and even if the costs can be aligned the undergrounding option will still be around 3-5 times more expensive than installing above ground cables. The time it will take to build and install underground cables is also a key consideration.

- A council CCG member stated that if Transgrid investigated undergrounding properly today and started installing it now then timing would not be an issue.
- A community CCG member noted that the State Government had spent \$230 billion on bushfires.
- A community CCG member commented that this is all about the cost of social license, Transgrid is impacting people's livelihoods so they should pay for that.
- Les noted that they did not agree with the 11-year time frame GHD stated an underground HVDC would take to construct in the report. Similar to the Marinus Link, it could be possible to complete the undergrounding in phases.
- Gordon noted that he is open to approaching the project taking new approaches and ideas into consideration, however the Energy Regulator determines the price and AEMO determines where the power goes to and from. If these large projects aren't completed soon the whole energy system may be compromised.
- *ACTION: Transgrid to inform the community members who they can contact and put their thoughts forward to the regulatory bodies.*
- A community CCG member commented that he has never been supportive of the undergrounding study due to its inability to come to fruition. As landowners, the focus should be on compensation.
- Gordon commented that there is value in the undergrounding report. It was also noted that Transgrid has been advocating with the NSW Government regarding compensation for landowners and in the coming months changes will be announced.
- A community CCG member noted that Transgrid are seeking social license, this could be the opportunity for Transgrid to become leaders in the space.
- Tim commented on the credibility of the undergrounding report. He noted that it is not uncommon when two experts are in the room, being Amplitude and GHD, the level of detail being discussed within the set parameters leads to disagreements on results. The objective was to ground truth and remove the multiple of 3 to 10. Tim noted he appreciated that it is a bad look for such numbers to be circulating and creating uncertainty, however it has been an

outcome of the process with so many people reviewing the numbers.

- A community CCG member commented that in the future Transgrid should not release document of such magnitude until everything has been determined.
- When presented with the route options report presented at the last CCG meeting, it was noted that the community members felt as though they had more knowledge than the Transgrid team who were presenting it. There were inconsistencies in the report that have also occurred in the undergrounding report.
- Gordon noted that Transgrid will do better because these issues are avoidable. He noted it looks as though it is a resourcing problem and he will ensure the team are properly resourced.
- A community CCG member commented that Transgrid need to put themselves in landowners' shoes when they release documents that are inaccurate.
- The Chair commented that the discussions that have been had to date speak to the commitment by the community members to bring themselves up to speed on the technical nature of the information. If the report is released, that should not imply endorsement by the Steering Committee.
- Dan outlined the process for the undergrounding study moving forward. There are a number of items to be addressed. If an agreement cannot be made, Transgrid will work with the Steering Committee before the report is released and Transgrid will take that into account during any decision making.
- The Chair thanked Les for his contribution to the Steering Committee and the CCG meetings.
- A community CCG member commented that it is not just the cost of undergrounding that needs to be considered. Often discussion centres around landowners versus consumers, however landowners are also consumers who are impacted by increasing prices of energy. There are significant costs to the mental health and wellbeing of those impacted by the project and concerns were expressed that some landowners were beginning to feel these impacts very acutely as the project goes on.

Chair's note - If any CCG member or someone they know is experiencing distress and needs assistance help can be found at:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Transgrid Assistance Line: <Number></i> ○ <i>Beyond Blue: 1300 222 4636</i> ○ <i>Lifeline: 13 11 14</i> - A community CCG member noted that the contract received from Transgrid does not account for the fact that the easement and transmission lines will inhibit the ability to fight fires and cut off access to the property because you cannot drive a vehicle on it. There are large impacts for landowners that are currently not being accounted for or recognised. - Gordon noted Transgrid is happy to look at the clauses in the contract. - A community CCG member commented that the contracts need to be written in plain English that is easily understood by everyone. This kind of thing disempowers landowners who have owned the land for generations. 	
Route refinement	<p>Naomi gave an update on the route refinement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Since March Transgrid has been progressively refining the route in response to a number of alternate options put forward by local communities, particularly around Bannaby and Tumut North. - Transgrid has a preference for a route and recognise the sensitivity. For those reasons, it is important an alternate body evaluates how the decisions were made and give an independent opinion. - Transgrid asked Brendan Nelson from MacroPlan to consider and analyse the community submissions, letter, photos and items received. Transgrid intends to identify if there is a situation where valid and fair criticism may exist on the route. <p>Brendan Nelson gave an overview of his role, experience and experience so far on the project. He can make recommendations from his observations that can be fed into the route decision and Environmental Impact Study (EIS).</p> <p>Brendan's initial observations included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transgrid has evolved in terms of maturity, considering early on in the project it is clear there was not enough resourcing for a project of this scale. The resourcing was not there to ensure an adequate level of comprehensiveness in the reviews and criteria being applied to the 	

route selection. Community input at this level is critical.

- There are two Government regulators who operate this space, the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) and the Australian Energy Regulator (AER). Both regulators focus on different aspects, DPE on people, place, the community and environment and AER on cost, efficiency and the end price for the consumer. Big energy projects such as HumeLink have to find the balance to address standards set by both regulators.
- Community involvement is critical as HumeLink is a State Significant Development, however there is no "magic bullet" solution as there are various components that must be taken into consideration before the final cost such as environmental, community and technical factors.
- In more recent times, there has been a lot of work done by Transgrid in contested locations and there are some refinements that could be done in relation to community. For future projects the community must be actively involved from the beginning to give everyone more comfort in the decisions being made.
- The use of public versus private land is a clear issue and where possible should be something advocated for, however in other locations putting the route through public land will increase impacts on other communities, there is a need to look at this route refinement holistically.
- The quality of the data available has increased since the inception of the project. Early engagement on the project was not favourable and the data was not available to provide evidence-based recommendations. The project is in a different space now and there is quality data available to give evidence-based reasoning. There is a strong need for further community engagement.
- The GHD route refinement report did not meet community expectations. The spirit in which Transgrid made the information available does display the level of maturity as the project has evolved. There is a lot of effort going behind the scenes that is not visible to the community that needs to be communicated more broadly.

Transgrid has a strong willingness to take on board all comments received.

- The value of agricultural land and whether it is as valuable as other land in the corridor needs to be given greater consideration. Continued and transparent engagement with the community will provide everyone involved with a level of comfort.
- The definition around what productive agricultural land is needs to be reconsidered, there have been some misguided views formed as a result of that. Some of the assessment that has been done on what productive land and associated benchmarking should have been changed.
- Brendan noted that his next steps will be to have a series of conversations with Transgrid and make a series of recommendations from there.
- A community CCG member commented that the same incorrect benchmarking seems to be being used for the undergrounding study. This is not new information for Transgrid, it was brought up at the last CCG meeting.
- Brendan agreed with the comment made. He noted that he would have done some aspects differently delivering a qualitative assessment that is subjective. However, he noted the final outcomes may not have differed. The bigger issue is hearing from the community about the options that are presented and how Transgrid takes that feedback into consideration.
- A community CCG member commented on the unfairness of the underground report if GHD are continuing to use the InDeGo scoring.
- Dan noted that yes, GHD have used the InDeGo scoring in the undergrounding report, however it has been used for a very high level estimation of costings. If undergrounding goes forward, there will have to be an entire route selection process. What has been presented is an early estimation to give an indication of feasibility.
- A community CCG member asked how the cost can be determined if there is no route to base the calculation off.

- Dan responded that the costs are high level, - 30% to +50%. The report tried to approximate different conditions using high level estimates.
- A community CCG member commented that everyone questioned the InDeGo scoring from the start and the answers given from Transgrid were not good enough.
- Gordon noted that he also didn't agree with all the outcomes of the undergrounding report, however when you consider whether it changes the final outcome on viability, there is little chance that it will change.
- A community CCG member asked Brendan how many landowners he visited.
- Brendan responded that he visited 6 landowners in a day and plans to visit more. He also plans to read all the submissions made and understand the feedback from the Humelink Action Group to explore ways to move forward.
- A community CCG member asked if there is an opportunity for the EIS to proceed in the areas along the route where there is no resistance and stage the progress of the study.
- Nathan noted that Transgrid is currently seeking advice on how to stage the EIS and the possible outcomes could be.
- A community CCG member asked if Brendan N is still open to discussing route options with stakeholders.
- Brendan N responded that he was and is using that feedback to validate his recommendations given to Transgrid.
- Brendan N noted that Transgrid has presented a number of different route options. Two years ago they didn't have the data they have now. When considering the route refinements, it is crucial to understand the flow on effects on local towns and landowners.
- Gordon commented that Transgrid are not opening up the whole route refinement, rather looking at the areas that are very controversial. They have to finalise the route under a timeline and want to be as respectful and meaningful in their analysis before a decision is made.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A community CCG member commented that when you consider public land, there are various versions of public land such as plantations and alternatives should be considered to avoid those areas. - Brendan noted that there has been a presumption that some agricultural land is not regarded in the same manner however, often contribute a similar value to Australian agriculture. Brendan’s observation was that some areas such as state forest have been avoided, however they are now being considered. - A community CCG member commented on the harmful environmental impacts of pine plantations. - Brendan noted that his aim is when the EIS is finalised, from his review, there will be enough evidence that all routes have been considered. - All the information provided by landowners has been investigated by Transgrid and relevant parties, although the due diligence may not have been completely communicated with the wider public. <p>Naomi noted that Transgrid has received many questions via multiple channels regarding GHD’s weighting criteria, InDeGo. The response required to those question is very technical, so they will be addressed with in a written response.</p> <p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Naomi noted that Transgrid are receiving recommendations from Brendan and will be working through them. - Brendan commented that the EIS is under development, there are many areas where the route is not being contested and work is progressing well. Brendan noted his hope for the progression of the route refinement is that when the route does have to traverse through a community they are aware of where it is going before the EIS goes out. 	
<p>Compensation</p>	<p>Carl Charlier introduced himself as the Commercial Manager for HumeLink and gave an update on compensation process and calculation.</p> <p>Special Benefit Payment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The NSW Government has been investigating strategic landholder payments to recognise landholders who host transformational 	

transmission projects. Transgrid has been working with government to explore these options.

Annualised Easement Payments

- Annual easement compensation payments have been investigated. There are challenges, including financier requirements. As a result Transgrid are focusing efforts on working with government on the special benefit payment.

From late July Transgrid will hold up to 12 webinars with landowners to discuss the compensation process.

- See slides 14 - 16 for an overview of the easement acquisition and negotiation process.
- Carl noted Transgrid are working with EnergyCo and the Department of Planning and Environment around additional payments over and above the value of impact. There is soon to be announcement made, however Transgrid cannot make the announcement.
- A community CCG member commented that landowners in the Upper Lachlan area have all received their compensation letters, the webinars etc all seem a bit late for them.
- Naomi noted that not everyone has received their letters. The webinars are an additional mechanism alongside the ability for landowners to engage their own reasonable legal counsel and financial advice etc. that Transgrid will cover the fees for. The webinars are being rolled out in phases as the letters are sent out.
- A community CCG member noted for vulnerable people who receive the compensation letter they may not consider getting a lawyer or financial advice and simply agreeing to the value they have been given and extra \$20,000.
- Carl noted that the option agreement gives landowners an option fee, so if the project does not proceed they will have an additional benefit. The \$20,000 is available when you sign the option agreement.
- You can negotiate the price before you sign the option agreement and still receive the \$20,000.
- *ACTION: Transgrid must improve its communications and clearly articulate this message to the community.*
- *ACTION: Transgrid to outline what constitutes "reasonableness" when referring to cover landowners' legal fees etc.*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>ACTION: Transgrid to provide clear communications around seeking independent advice.</i> - A community CCG member asked how Transgrid can determine the cost of compensation if they only have access to approximately 60% of the route. - Nathan noted it depends on the site and contingencies need to be worked through on the level of accuracy. This will be dealt with in the EIS. - A community CCG member suggested that Transgrid should create focus groups to test documents and processes with the community/landowners before they are made public. 	
<p>Planning and approvals</p>	<p>Naomi gave an update on the EIS Planning Pathway</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technical specialists have been out on the field as well as completing desktop assessment modelling. <p>Naomi gave an update on EIS engagement activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See slide 21 for an overview of upcoming pre-EIS engagement activities. - A CCG member commented that the sooner EIS engagement is undertaken the better. If you were to ask people in the community, one in ten people would know what HumeLink is. 	
<p>Update on community engagement</p>	<p>Naomi gave a summary of the results from the social impacts and opportunities workshops that occurred after the last CCG meetings in Yass and Wagga. These workshops are yet to occur in the Snowy Valleys CCG as it was not appropriate to do so during the last CCG meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>ACTION: determine the next steps for the social impacts and opportunities workshop in with the Snowy Valleys CCG.</i> - See slide 23 for a summary of the needs/impacts and opportunities. - See slide 24 for an overview of upcoming community engagement activities. 	
<p>Agenda setting for subsequent meetings</p>	<p>Next meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The next meeting is to be held preferably in late August. The date will be confirmed. <p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wednesday 12 <p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wednesday 7 	

Meeting close

The meeting closed at 7:54pm.

Following the meeting a number of observers in the room made comments and asked questions of the Transgrid project team.

Some of the questions covered included:

- EMF at full load and impacts on residents and livestock
- Bushfire risk
- Cumulative impacts on operation and visual amenity of properties with multiple easements.

Action	Status or comment
Secretariat is to follow up with members on administrative details including signed Code of Conduct Agreements and sharing of contact details.	Ongoing
Transgrid to institute the \$50 reimbursement for eligible members	Ongoing
Transgrid to provide CCG members with a diagram presenting how planning and regulatory processes relate	Underway
Transgrid to provide a timeline/diagram of HumeLink progress as it currently stands and a timeline of HumeLink progress if undergrounding or Option 2F are deemed feasible	Underway
HumeLink EIS and SEARs to be circulated to CCG members	Underway
Transgrid to follow up with GHD for more insight into their value scoring methodology and reasoning, including the difference in value between agricultural land compared to State Forest.	Underway
Transgrid to follow up with GHD for more insight into the social and environmental matters included in its model InDeGo (Infrastructure Development Geospatial Options), how they are weighted and the scoring methodology.	Underway
Transgrid to request the value of the multiplier from used in their report.	Underway
Transgrid to provide the CCG with technical information explaining how the structural integrity of the transmission lines is maintained in windy conditions.	Underway
Transgrid to confirm with the CCG if any of the transmission 500kv lines between Bannaby and Bayswater have come down.	Underway
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Transgrid to inform the community members who they can contact and put their thoughts forward to the regulatory bodies.	
Transgrid must improve its communications and clearly articulate this message to the community.	
Transgrid to outline what constitutes "reasonableness" when referring to cover landowners" legal fees etc.	
Transgrid to provide clear communications around seeking independent advice.	

Determine the next steps for the social impacts and opportunities workshop in with the Snowy Valleys CCG.	
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